

September 30, 2020

Statement in solidarity with Triunfo de la Cruz community in Honduras

On July 18, 2020, five men, among them activists and community leaders, were kidnapped at gunpoint from their homes in Triunfo de la Cruz, Atlántida, Honduras, an Afro-Honduran Garífuna community. Over two months later, their families still do not know their whereabouts and face threats against their own lives.

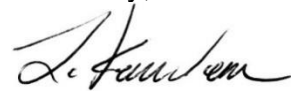
Lancaster Mennonite Conference (LMC), in solidarity with this community, which is home to an LMC pastor and a Garífuna Mennonite Church, calls for the safe return of the kidnapped men, the identification and prosecution of their abductors, protection for the men's families and respect for the entire community's right to its land.

The forced disappearance of these men takes place in a context where indigenous groups and community activists face significant threats, from which the Honduran state has largely failed to protect them. In 2015, the Inter-American Human Rights Court called on the Honduran government to compensate Garífuna communities for land seizures, return historic land that had been appropriated and recognize "systematic acts of repression" against the communities. Despite an order from the court to investigate and prosecute those responsible for threatening and intimidating these communities, violent acts continued – at least 18 members of the Garífuna community have been murdered since September 2019.

Echoing the sentiment of the Honduran Mennonite Church, LMC Churches declares that "silence and indifference before acts of violence and injustice affecting those around us makes us complicit in those actions (Romans 1:32)" For this reason, we call on the relevant Honduran authorities, investigative bodies, and courts to work together in the search for and response to the kidnappings of these five men from the community of Triunfo de la Cruz.

We also call on U.S. officials including the U.S. embassy in Honduras to exert pressure on Honduran authorities to ensure that this case is investigated and results in convictions and answers for these five men's families. The United States should be vocal and consistent in its condemnation of human rights abuses, violence and appropriation of indigenous land.

Sincerely,



L. Keith Weaver, Moderator
Lancaster Mennonite Conference